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ABSTRACT

Instructional and psychological concerns of preservice and beginning teachers have been well documented; however, little research has been done on novice teachers' perceptions of cooperating teachers. This study investigates student and cooperating teachers' perceptions about the roles and functions of the cooperating teacher. The Cooperating Teachers' Functions Survey was administered to student teachers enrolled in the teacher preparation program at Arizona State University and to their cooperating teachers. The survey lists 14 functions, actions, and activities that a cooperating teacher might provide for a student teacher. The items reflect three distinct domains of concern demonstrated by student teachers: personal, instructional, and professional. Results suggest that cooperating teachers should demonstrate qualities of effective mentors. They should be caring, active listeners, sensitive to the views of others; they need to understand the comprehensiveness of the mentoring role and to offer candid, regular feedback in a supportive manner. Shared understandings of purpose between students and cooperating teachers can serve as a vehicle for facilitating dialogue between the veteran and the preservice teacher. A beneficial conversation between the cooperating and student teacher may result in an awareness of the perceived role of the cooperating teacher by both parties. (LL)

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Student Teachers' and Cooperating Teachers' Perspectives of Mentoring Functions: Harmony or Dissonance

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Student Teachers' and Cooperating Teachers' Perspectives of Mentoring Functions: Harmony or Dissonance?

One paramount purpose of the student teaching experience is to provide an opportunity for preservice teachers to advance their instructional skills while gaining confidence and competence in a classroom setting. This goal is traditionally accomplished by apprenticing an aspiring teacher to a practicing veteran. Cooperating teachers are primarily selected because they demonstrate effective teaching and classroom management skills. Yet, the role of the cooperating teacher is much more complex than that of an effective instructional model. To effectively facilitate the instructional development of a student teacher, the cooperating teacher must be able to identify and respond appropriately to the beginner's concerns. Moreover, cooperating teachers must have a comprehensive view of their mentoring role and responsibilities.

Researchers (Enz, 1991; Odell, 1986; Veenman, 1984; and Fuller, 1969) have documented the instructional and psychological concerns of the preservice and beginning teacher. However, little research has been conducted to determine student teachers' and cooperating teachers' perceptions about the roles and functions of the cooperating teacher. The research that does exist tends to suggest that, although there is a shared understanding of the purpose of student teaching, there is divergence of opinion and interpretation regarding the cooperating teacher's role (Besswick, Harman, Elsworth, Fallon, and Woock, 1980).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of student teachers and cooperating teachers about the possible functions of cooperating teachers. The student teachers in the study were enrolled in two teacher preparation programs: an undergraduate professional teacher preparation program and a post baccalaureate program offered at the same institution on two campuses. The cooperating teachers were identified as veterans, those who were experienced in the role, and as uninitiated, those teachers who had not yet had the opportunity to serve in the role.

Specifically, this study investigated:

1. The roles and functions of the cooperating teacher as perceived by undergraduate student teachers.
2. The roles and functions of the cooperating teacher as perceived by post baccalaureate student teachers.
3. The roles and functions of the cooperating teacher as perceived by veteran cooperating teachers.
4. The roles and functions of the cooperating teacher as perceived by uninitiated cooperating teachers.

Description of the Teacher Preparation Programs

Arizona State University offers two teacher preparation programs at both ASU Main and at ASU West. The Professional Teacher Preparation Program is a four semester sequential program of upper division coursework designed for undergraduate students. The PTP program is characterized by field experiences that are required each semester and increase in time and complexity of assignment,

culminating in a 15-week student teaching assignment. The post baccalaureate program is designed for students who have earned a bachelor's degree in a non-education field and wish to obtain initial teacher certification in Arizona. This program lacks the early field experiences that are central to the undergraduate preparation program. Post-bac students enrolled in an elementary certification program may experience their first exposure to a classroom setting during the 15-week student teaching assignment. Secondary post-bac students participate in an entry level field experience, but are not exposed again to classroom settings until the student teaching assignment. Students in the PTP program are admitted to one of three majors: Elementary, Secondary, or Special Education. They may select options from additional areas of emphases and endorsements in Early Childhood Education, English as a Second Language, Bilingual Education, Art, Music, or Physical Education. Secondary students must have a content major such as English, Social Studies, Math, Science, etc. Post baccalaureate students are admitted to elementary or secondary programs and may pursue a concomitant Master's degree in either area but must obtain the advanced degree in special education for certification.

Characteristics of the Student Populations

Demographic survey data of the student populations enrolled in the PTPP (n = 533) and post-bac program (n = 180) were different than anticipated. Although a small proportion of the undergraduate student population reflected the characteristics of the traditional

non-working, single, 20-22 year-old student, the demographic characteristics of the undergraduates were remarkably similar to the post baccalaureate population. The distribution of age and life experiences between the two student populations was parallel. For example, proportionately as many younger students to older students, single/married/divorced students, students with children to students with no children and part- to full-time students were evidenced in the enrollment in the two programs. Figure 1 illustrates the age range and means of the student populations.

Figure 1

Program	N	Mean Age	Range	
			Minimum Age	Maximum Age
PTPP	533	29	20	60
Post-bac	190	31	21	61

Selection Criteria for Cooperating Teachers

The cooperating teacher has a significant impact on the student teacher's professional career (Hauwiller, Abel, Ausel, Sparapani, 1988-89; Armaline and Hoover, 1989). Therefore, the College of Education at Arizona State university has established criteria to guide school administrators in selecting veteran and uninitiated teachers who will serve as role models for the incoming generation of teachers. The criteria are as follows:

Teaching Competence: The cooperating teacher should have:

*Demonstrated excellence in teaching as documented by district evaluations;
*A positive classroom environment characterized by proactive interpersonal skills and effective classroom management;
*A functional instructional program that features initial planning, comprehensive delivery strategies, ongoing evaluation of students, and demonstrated adjustment of curricular materials and instructional methods to meet the diverse needs of students.

District Experience: The cooperating teacher should:

*Have completed a minimum of three years of teaching experience (exceptions are made if teachers are recent graduates of ASU);
*Be certified in the area of emphasis in which the student teacher is seeking certification;
*Be a full-time teacher during the term the student teacher will be present;
*Have completed a minimum of one year at the grade level or in the subject area they are currently teaching.

Professionalism: The cooperating teacher should:

*View sponsorship of a student teacher as a contribution to the profession;
*Demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to share responsibility for the classroom;

*Demonstrate willingness and ability to objectively assess the student teacher's instructional performance;

*Demonstrate willingness and ability to provide frequent, specific performance feedback to the student teacher;

*Demonstrate willingness to help the student teacher become a reflective practitioner;

*Have completed the Assessment and Supervision of Instruction course.

Figure 2 displays the mean and the range of the number of years of teaching experience of the veteran and uninitiated cooperating teachers in this study.

Figure 2

Group	N	Mean	Years/Range of Teaching Experience Minimum	Maximum
Veteran	579	14	5	35
Uninitiated	244	9	2*	18

*Recent graduates of ASU

Training for Cooperating Teachers

Earlier research (Besswick, Harman, Elsworth, Fallon, And Woock, 1980) coupled with our own experiences in placing and supervising student teachers revealed that although, cooperating teachers understood the purpose of student teaching, they frequently expressed confusion and uncertainty about their roles and responsibilities.

That concern motivated us to develop a 15-hour course designed to delineate the roles and responsibilities of hosting student teachers and to clarify the requirements of the student teaching experience. The course reviews the use of the Professional Attributes Scale (Enz, Freeman, and Cook, 1990), the use of the Instructional Development Scales (Enz, Freeman, Cook, Stamm, and Kimerer, 1991), methods for observing and documenting instructional performance, and clinical supervision and coaching techniques.

Methods

All subjects were administered the "Cooperating Teachers' Functions Survey" which is an instrument constructed by Anderson and Enz (1988). The survey lists 14 functions/actions/activities that a cooperating teacher might provide for a student teacher. The items were developed to reflect three distinct domains of concerns demonstrated by student teachers: Personal; Instructional; and Professional.

The personal domain reflects those actions related to friendship, support, and encouragement. The instructional domain identifies activities that are more directly related to the planning and delivery of instruction and the management of students and the classroom. The professional domain suggests those functions that are related to understanding and operating in the complex culture of a school.

All subjects were directed to allocate 100 points among the 14 items on the survey. The number of points allocated to each item

reflects each subject's feelings about the relative importance of that function. Student teachers were asked to complete the survey during a day-long orientation about the student teaching experience, hosted prior to the commencement of student teaching. Cooperating teachers were administered the survey during the initial meeting of the Assessment and Supervision of Instruction course. Figure 3 is a sample of the Cooperating Teachers' Functions Survey.

Figure 3

Name_____SS#_____ Sex: M____F____ Age:_____

Asian____Black____White____Hispanic____Native American____

District:_____ School_____

Professional Specialization: ECD____EED____SPE____SED____BLE/ESL____

Preparation Program: PTPP____ Post-bac____

COOPERATING TEACHERS' FUNCTIONS

There are a number of things a cooperating teacher might do to assist a student teacher. Listed below are 14 items that indicate the variety and types of assistance. Please allocate 100 points among the 14 items reflecting your feelings about the relative importance of each item. You may assign zero (0) points to an item but your total must equal 100 points.

____ Provide moral support and encouragement.
____ Provide information about faculty politics and relationships.
____ Help to locate and select resource materials.
____ Demonstrate friendship and acceptance.
____ Provide information about district policies and procedures.
____ Provide advice on lesson plan development.
____ Demonstrate an interest in non-school life.
____ Give advice about routine classroom clerical responsibilities.
____ Give advice about classroom management and discipline.
____ Give advice about balancing personal and professional time.
____ Give advice about parent teacher conferences.
____ Observe lessons and provide feedback.
____ Give information about roles/responsibilities of classified staff.
____ Demonstrate lessons.

Data Analysis and Findings

The means for each item and for each subgroup (PTPP and post baccalaureate student teachers and the veteran and uninitiated cooperating teachers) were calculated. Initial t-tests were conducted between the two subgroups of student teachers and the two populations of cooperating teachers.

Student Teachers Preliminary analysis revealed no significant differences for any of the 14 items between student teachers in the undergraduate PTP program and student teachers in the post baccalaureate program. The 14 items were then reorganized by domain. Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations of the two student teacher subgroups, by item, within each domain. A test of homogeneity of variance was applied to the data to determine if the data of the two subgroups could be pooled. The test revealed that the data were normally distributed. Therefore, the data sets could be combined.

Table 1

Cooperating Teachers Preliminary analysis found no significant differences among any of the 14 items between veteran and uninitiated cooperating teachers. The 14 items were reorganized by domain. Table 2 displays the means and standard deviations of the two cooperating teacher subgroups by domain. Again, a test of homogeneity of variance was conducted to determine if the data of the two subgroups could be

pooled. The findings indicated that the data were normally distributed so that the cooperating teacher data sets were combined.

Table 2

Employing a t-test for significant differences, the weighted ratings of the cooperating teachers were compared to those of the student teachers. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the combined cooperating and student teacher data. Seven of the 14 items revealed significant differences between the weighted rankings of cooperating and student teachers. When the data were organized within the major conceptual domains, differences and similarities provided an interesting picture of the cooperating teachers' perceptions of their roles and the student teachers' perceptions of what they expected or wanted a cooperating teacher to do.

Table 3

Personal Domain There were no significant differences among the means on the items within this domain. Both student teachers (domain total = 21.70) and cooperating teachers (domain total = 22.21) viewed a cooperating teacher as someone who should be a personal confidante, able to provide moral support and encouragement, friendship, and acceptance. These findings are similar to the results of other research conducted with beginning and mentor teachers involved in induction programs (Enz, 1991; Odell, 1986). Yet, it appears that neither group felt the relationship should extend to their lives

outside of the school context. Both cooperating teachers and student teachers gave their lowest point weightings to the behaviors of demonstrating an interest in nonschool life and giving advice about balancing personal and professional time.

Instructional Domain The items in this domain received the highest mean weighted scores from both cooperating teachers (domain total = 56.51) and student teachers (domain total = 53.45). These findings suggest that both cooperating and student teachers strongly perceive the cooperating teacher's role as that of an instructional guide. Both groups viewed observing lessons and providing feedback as critical as evidenced by the reported means.

There were some unique differences among items, however, as cooperating teachers viewed the activities of giving advice about classroom management and discipline as significantly more important than the student teachers. Differences in perception or concern may be due, in part, to the cooperating teachers' memories. Veenman (1984) found that teachers who were asked to recall their first years of teaching viewed discipline and management issues as their greatest challenge. Preservice teachers have not yet experienced the induction year and the full scope of responsibilities inherent to teaching.

Another area of difference between the student teachers and the cooperating teachers was the function of demonstrating lessons. Perhaps this is accounted for by the student teachers' eagerness to teach and their naive reluctance to observe yet another lesson. In fact, our experience has shown us that many student teachers believe that they should be able to "take over" the class within a few days

of student teaching (Enz, Cook, and Wallin, 1992). At another level, this may also reveal that student teachers do not fully understand the complexity of teaching nor do they appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with a colleague. Excellent teachers can make teaching look easy, just as a skilled ballerina can make dancing en pointe appear effortless. Like the ballerina, a teacher's performance can belie years of training and experience. Indeed, it is often experienced teachers who most appreciate the chance to watch other teachers ply their craft (Searfoss and Enz, 1992).

Interestingly, cooperating teachers weighted the function of helping to locate and select resource materials significantly lower than student teachers. This difference may be a phenomenon of experience. Over time, teachers collect and construct crates of instructional materials. For cooperating teachers, the problem is one of choosing what to use, instead of finding or creating new materials. Student teachers are frequently overwhelmed by the seeming abundance of available materials in their cooperating teachers' classrooms, anticipating their own classrooms which may well be virtually empty.

Professional Domain This domain focuses on the school culture and context. Significantly, it is this dimension in which the greatest differences in perception existed (cooperating teachers' domain total = 21.61; student teachers' domain total = 24.85). In this domain, student teachers weighted the functions of providing information about faculty politics and relationships, district policies and procedures, providing information about roles and responsibilities of

classified staff, and advice about parent conferences significantly higher than their cooperating teachers. In each case, the cooperating teachers appeared to underestimate the student teachers' need to understand the culture of schools. Cooperating teachers are so much a part of the unique culture of their schools that, perhaps, it is difficult for them to perceive and articulate the full context that may perplex the newcomer. Traditions in a school and relationships among staff members that are familiar and comforting to insiders may cause student teachers to feel unconnected and socially isolated. Moreover, these findings may suggest that student teachers perceive the cooperating teacher's role as interpreter or anthropologist of the school culture. If so, additional questions need to be asked about who is in the best position to articulate the context of the school culture and how is that most effectively done.

Implications

Cooperating teachers ought to be selected because they demonstrate the qualities of effective mentors. In addition to instructional and management strengths, effective cooperating teachers should be caring, active listeners who are sensitive to the views of others and who are able and willing to articulate the intricacies of their craft and the subtleties of the school culture. Effective cooperating teachers who fully understand the comprehensiveness of the mentoring role recognize that student teachers will be better prepared for teaching if they can take instructional risks. Candid, regular feedback offered in a supporting

manner can significantly increase the quality of the student teacher's instructional performance and professional confidence.

However, effective mentoring does not always happen intuitively. Shared understandings of the purposes of student teaching must extend to shared understandings about the roles and functions of the cooperating teacher. Both cooperating teachers and student teachers may find an instrument like the Cooperating Teachers' Functions Survey useful for determining each others' perspectives and needs. If shared, the instrument can serve as a vehicle for facilitating dialogue between the veteran and the preservice novice. If a cooperating teacher and student teacher compare ratings prior to the student teaching experience, gross mismatches in personality and ideology may surface, prompting the university to place the student teacher in another, more appropriate setting. More likely is a beneficial conversation between the cooperating and student teacher that results in an awareness of the perceived role of the cooperating teacher by both parties. Identifying areas of harmony or dissonance about the role of the cooperating teacher is critical for the success of the developing professional.

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Table 1
COOPERATING TEACHER FUNCTIONS:
PTPP & Post-Bac Perspectives

FUNCTION	PTPP = 533		Post Bac = 180		
Domain	M	SD	Pre	SD	p
Personal					
Support & Encouragement	10.54	7.10	10.10	7.37	
Friendship	6.03	4.36	5.66	3.31	
Personal/Professional Time	3.13	2.90	3.12	2.94	
Non-School Interest	2.00	2.21	2.09	2.44	
Total	21.70		20.97		
Instructional					
Observation/Feedback	13.82	7.89	13.43	5.96	
Management & Discipline	12.65	5.84	13.38	6.86	
Lesson Planning	10.00	4.39	10.45	5.19	
Demonstrate Lessons	10.00	4.44	9.27	4.58	
Resource Materials	7.88	4.52	7.93	4.06	
Total	54.35		54.46		
Professional					
Parent Conference	6.39	2.91	6.49	3.18	
Policies/Procedures	5.79	3.13	5.78	3.23	
Clerical Responsibilities	5.57	3.32	5.65	3.16	
Staff Roles	3.55	2.56	3.45	2.74	
Faculty Politics	3.53	2.98	3.41	3.02	
Total	24.83		24.78		

Table 2

COOPERATING TEACHER FUNCTIONS:
Veterans vs. Uninitiated

FUNCTION	Uninitiated = 244*		Veteran = 579		p
Domain	M	SD	M	SD	
Personal					
Support & Encouragement	10.61	5.18	10.67	5.30	
Friendship	6.21	3.76	6.17	3.78	
Personal/Professional Time	3.04	2.69	3.16	3.03	
Non-School Interest	2.10	2.16	2.15	2.39	
Total	21.96		22.15		
Instructional					
Observation/Feedback	14.27	6.16	14.37	5.76	
Management & Discipline	13.42	5.02	13.54	5.14	
Lesson Planning	10.26	4.00	10.31	4.60	
Demonstrate Lessons	11.80	5.42	11.82	5.07	
Resource Materials	6.88	3.49	6.62	3.13	
Total	56.63		56.66		
Professional					
Parent Conference	6.11	2.87	6.04	2.91	
Policies/Procedures	4.69	2.78	4.50	2.62	
Clerical Responsibilities	5.87	3.33	6.05	3.08	
Staff Roles	3.11	2.52	2.85	2.30	
Faculty Politics	1.87	2.05	2.33	2.39	
Total	21.65		21.77		

* 59 Cooperating teachers did not respond to this category, however their M were not significantly different.

COOPERATING TEACHER FUNCTIONS:
Cooperating Teachers(CT) vs. Student Teachers(ST)

FUNCTION	CT = 882		ST = 710			
	M	SD	M	SD	T	P
Domain						
Personal						
Support & Encouragement	10.64	5.32	10.54	7.10		
Friendship	6.34	3.72	6.03	4.04		
Personal/Professional Time	3.08	2.77	3.13	2.91		
Non-School Interest	2.15	2.29	2.00	2.29		
Total	22.21		21.70			
Instructional						
Observation/Feedback	14.48	6.13	13.82	7.30		
Management & Discipline	13.44	5.36	12.65	6.22	2.52	.0100
Lesson Planning	10.29	4.36	10.00	4.68		
Demonstrate Lessons	11.66	5.07	9.10	4.49	9.92	.0001
Resource Materials	6.64	3.41	7.88	4.36	-5.59	.0001
Total	56.51		53.45			
Professional						
Parent Conference	6.06	2.96	6.39	3.00	-2.03	.0400
Policies/Procedures	4.55	2.70	5.80	3.16	-7.58	.0001
Clerical Responsibilities	5.87	3.06	5.58	3.26		
Staff Roles	2.91	2.44	3.53	2.62	-4.08	.0001
Faculty Politics	2.21	2.31	3.55	3.00	-9.43	.0001
Total	21.61		24.85			